

Whooping-cough.

State Department of Health of Maine.

To lower the unnecessary death-rate of the babies and younger children, this disease, whooping-cough, as well as measles must be controlled better than it is. Like measles, whooping-cough is a dangerous disease for young children. In the last six years, measles caused 303 deaths in Maine, while whooping cough did still worse, for 430 deaths were caused by that disease in the same time.

How Spread.

The infective agent of whooping-cough is received into the system through the nose and mouth, and after the child begins to show symptoms, he gives off the infection in what comes from the nose and mouth. Particularly when coughing, the infection is thrown into the air so that other persons may breathe it in. The infection may also be carried from the sick to the well by means of infected fingers, spoons, towels, drinking cups, or other things which may carry the infection directly from infectious persons to the mouth or nose of others.

Infective Period.

After a child who has never had whooping-cough has been exposed to that disease, from 6 to 14 days pass without a symptom. Then if he has taken the disease, the eyes of the child become reddened and he appears as though he had a slight cold. The cough, instead of becoming better in a short time as in an ordinary cold, becomes more frequent and more

troublesome. After some days, and in many cases it is some weeks, the spasmodic or "whooping" stage begins.

From the day in which the first symptoms show themselves, the child is infectious and may give the disease to other children; and from the beginning of the symptoms for five weeks and until the whoop has ceased entirely, the child should be kept from school and Sunday school and away from all children who have not had whooping-cough. So, just as in measles, the work of keeping the disease from spreading must begin early—with the child who has been exposed from the time of the very first symptoms or before.

Weighing the Danger.

Does the mother who exposes her baby to the infection of whooping-cough weigh the danger? If she carelessly or ignorantly lets her baby, in its first year, have the disease, she cuts down its chances of living from ten to fifty per cent. That is, from ten to fifty of the babies out of every hundred who suffer an attack of whooping-cough die. And then, in addition to that, the various complications which follow whooping-cough carry off many other children.

Nine-tenths of the children who die from the results of whooping-cough are taken off by broncho-pneumonia. Tuberculosis somewhat frequently follows whooping-cough. The severe and frequently repeated attacks of coughing, ending in vomiting, make it very difficult to keep up the nutrition of the child. Convulsions and even hemorrhage into the brain sometimes result from the intense congestion of the head and brain, which accompany what very often looks like a life and death struggle of the little one to get its breath.

For the Welfare of the Sick Child.

1. As the death-rate among children who have whooping-cough is very much greater when they have the disease in their first few years, they should be guarded from this danger in their earlier years. Children under five should be carefully shielded and so should all who are sick or enfeebled by other causes. It should also be remembered that whooping-cough is more dangerous in the cold season than in warm weather.

2. As the death-rate is much greater among children who are not well nourished and among those where the air and other

conditions in the home are not good, they should be kept in the open air as much as possible when the weather permits. When indoors they should have well-ventilated rooms, but they should be protected from direct drafts. It is still more important not to let them stay in too hot or too dry an atmosphere.

3. Indoors or out, the life of the whooping-cough child should be quiet mentally and physically. Too vigorous exercise or the excitement of laughing or crying serves to bring on attacks of coughing and the vomiting which often accompanies the paroxysms of coughing.

For the Safety of Other Children.

One of the most eminent of our medical authors says: "There is perhaps no other disease causing the same amount of suffering and the same danger to life as whooping-cough in which there is an equally shocking disregard of the rights and feelings of others."

Whooping-cough is one of the diseases that must be reported to the local board of health, and while strict quarantine of the family is not required, the local board has full authority to require parents to keep infectious children from coming in contact with other children.

For the good of the children, parents and teachers should be willing to work with the local boards of health to carry out these rules.

1. Whether indoors or out, keep the child who has whooping-cough away from other children who have not had that disease. It is just as important not to let the child spread infection who has been exposed and is showing those first symptoms which may mean whooping-cough—reddened eyes, a little cold in the head, and a beginning cough—for the disease is infectious at this early state. This means that we must think and act early.

2. For the safety of children in the same family who have not had whooping-cough, the sick one should be especially cared for in a room by himself. The infection usually does not involve the whole house; but the danger to the other children is in coming in contact with the sick one or in having the infection *carried* to them: (a) by the hands and perhaps by the clothing of those who take care of the sick; (b) by the things which have been used by the sick one.

3. The attendant upon the child with whooping-cough should have washbasin, soap and towel used by no one else, and when she must leave the sick one she should wash her hands very carefully before she touches things to be used by other persons.

4. The sick one must have drinking cups, spoons, towels, napkins, handkerchiefs, and everything else for his own use which might carry infection to others if they are used in common, for the surest way of carrying infection is by means of those things which may carry it directly to the mouth or nose.

5. The infection of whooping-cough is short-lived. A formal disinfection of the house is therefore not needed if the child recovers. If it dies, particularly before it has been sick long, the sick-room and its contents should be carefully cleaned and disinfected—cleansing, airing out, and exposure to sunshine. Disinfect the things used by the sick child by washing, boiling, or by steam disinfection.

Save the babies. Eliminate whooping-cough and measles. These two diseases, and the troubles that follow them, kill many babies every year.